



"Minot, old chap," drawled Lord Harrowby. "it's all over!"

drawers had been emptied on the floor, the bed was torn to pieces, the rug thrown in a corner. Minot smiled to himself.

Someone had been searching—searching for Chain Lightning's collar. Who? Who but the man he had bumped against in that dark passageway?

CHAPTER IX. "Wanted: Board and Room"

As Dick Minot bent over to pick up his scattered property a knock sounded on the half-open door, and Lord Harrowby drooped in. The nobleman was gloom personified. He threw himself despondently down on the bed.

"Minot, old chap," he drawled, "it's all over!" His eyes took in the wreckage. "Eh? What the deuce have you been doing, old boy?"

"I haven't been doing anything," Minot answered; "but others have been busy. While we were at the—er—theater fond fingers have been searching for Chain Lightning's collar."

"The devil! You haven't lost it?"

"No—not yet, I believe," Minot took the envelop from his pocket and drew out the gleaming necklace. "Ah, it's still safe!"

Harrowby leaped from the bed and slammed shut the door. "Dear old boy," he cried, "keep the accursed thing in your pocket! No one must see it. I say, who's been searching here? Do you think it could have been O'Malley?"

"What O'Malley's interest in your necklace?"

"Some other time, please. Sorry to inconvenience you with the thing. Do hang onto it, won't you? Awful mixup if you didn't. Bad mixup as it is. As I said when I came in, it's all over."

"What's all over?"

"Everything,—the marriage, my chance for happiness. Minot, I'm a most unlucky chap. Meyrick has just postponed the wedding in a frightfully loud tone of voice."

"Postponed it?" Sad news for Jephson this; yet as he spoke Minot felt a thrill of pleasure in his heart. He smiled the pleasantest smile he had so far shown San Marco.

"Exactly. He was fearfully rattled, was Meyrick. My word! how he did go on! Considers his daughter humiliated by the antics of that creature we saw on the stage tonight. Can't say I blame him, either. The wedding is indefinitely postponed, unless that impostor is removed from the scene immediately."

"Oh—unless!" said Minot. His heart sank. His smile vanished.

"Unless was the word, I fancy," said Harrowby, blinking wisely.

"Lord Harrowby," Minot began, "you intimated the other day that this man might really be your brother—"

"No," Harrowby broke in. "Impossible! I got a good look at the chap tonight. He's no more a Harrowby than you are."

"You give me your word for that?"

"Absolutely. Even after twenty years of America no Harrowby would drag his father's name on the vaudeville stage. No, he is an impostor, and as such he deserves no consideration whatever. And, by the by, Minot—you will note that the postponement is through no fault of mine."

Minot made a wry face. "I have noted it," he said. "In other words, I go onto the stage now—following the man who followed the trained seals. I thought my role was that of Cupid; but it begins to look more like Captain Kidd. Ah, well—I'll do my best." He stood up. "I'm going out into the soft moonlight for a little while, Lord Harrowby. While I'm gone you might call Spencer Meyrick up and ask him to do nothing definite in the way of postponement until he hears from me—us—er—you."

"Splendid of you, really!" said Harrowby enthusiastically, as Minot held open the door for him. "I had the feeling I could fall back on you."

"And I have the feeling that you've fallen," smiled Minot. "So long—better wait up for my report."

FIFTEEN minutes later, seated in a small rowboat on the starry waters of the harbor, Minot was loudly saluting the yacht Lileth. Finally Martin Wall appeared at the rail.

"Well—what d'you want?" he demanded.

"A word with you, Mr. Wall," Minot answered.

"Will you be good enough to let down your accommodation ladder?"

For a moment Wall hesitated. And Minot, watching him, knew why he hesitated. He suspected that the young man in the tiny boat there on the calm, bright waters had come to repay a call earlier in the evening—a call made when the host was out. At last he decided to let down the ladder.

"Glad to see you," he announced genially as Minot came on deck.

"Awfully nice of you to say that," Minot laughed.

"Reassures me. Because I've heard there are sharks in these waters."

They sat down in wicker chairs on the forward deck. Minot stared at the cluster of lights that was San Marco by night.

"Corking view you have of that tourist-haunted town," he commented.

"Ah—yes," Wall's queer eyes narrowed. "Did you row out here to tell me that?" he inquired.

"A deserved rebuke," Minot returned. "Time flies, and my errand is a pressing one. Am I right in assuming, Mr. Wall, that you are Lord Harrowby's friend?"

"I am."

"Good! Then you will want to help him in the very serious difficulty in which he now finds himself. Mr. Wall, the man who calls himself the real Lord Harrowby made his debut on a vaudeville stage tonight."

"So I've heard," said Wall, with a short laugh.

"Lord Harrowby's fiancée and her father are greatly disturbed. They insist that this impostor must be removed from the scene at once, or there will be no wedding. Mr. Wall—it is up to you and me to remove him."

"Just what is your interest in the matter?" Wall inquired.

"The same as yours. I am Harrowby's friend. Now, Mr. Wall, this is the situation as I see it: Wanted, board and room in a quiet neighborhood for Mr. George Harrowby, far from the streetcars, the vaudeville stage, the wedding march, and other disturbing elements. And, what is more, I think I've found the quiet neighborhood. I think it's right here aboard the Lileth."

"Oh—indeed!"

"Yes. A simple affair to arrange, Mr. Wall. Trimmer and his live proposition are just about due for their final appearance of the night at the Opera House right now. I will call at the stage door and lead Mr. Trimmer away after his little introductory speech. I will keep him away until you and a couple of your sailors—I suggest the two I met so informally on the North River—have met the vaudeville Lord at the stage door and gently but firmly persuaded him to come aboard this boat."

Wall regarded Minot with a cynical smile. "A clever scheme," he said. "What should you say was the penalty for kidnapping in this State?"

"Oh, why look it up?" asked Minot carelessly. "Surely Martin Wall is not afraid of a backwoods constable."

"What do you mean by that, my boy?" said Wall, with an ugly stare.

"What do you think I mean?" Minot smiled back. "I'd be very glad to take the role I've assigned you—I can't help feeling that it will be more entertaining than the one I have. The difficulty in the way is Trimmer. I believe I am better fitted to engage his attention. I know him better than you do, and he trusts me—begging your pardon—further."

"He did give me a nasty dig," said Wall, flaming at the recollection. "The noisy mountebank! Well, my